

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MANILA 3946

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SUBJ: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: THE SOLID NORTH

1. SUMMARY: IN REGIONS I (ILOCOS) AND II (CAGAYAN VALLEY), BOTH TRADITIONAL MARCOS STRONGHOLDS, THE APRIL 7 ELECTION IS NO CONTEST. THE REAL BATTLE--FOR SEATS ON THE PRO-MARCOS KILUSANG BANGONG LIPUNAN (KBL) TICKET--IS OVER. THE REGIONAL KBL SLATES, WHICH EMERGED AFTER CONSIDERABLE INFIGHTING TO DETERMINE WHO ARE THE MOST LOYAL OF THE LOYAL, HAVE ACCOMMODATED MOST OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL FACTIONS IN REGIONS I AND II. THE EXCEPTION IS KALINGA-APAYAO, WHERE THERE ARE COMPLAINTS THAT THE PROVINCE IS REPRESENTED ON THE REGION II KBL SLATE BY A NON-NATIVE. IN ILOCOS, THE KBL SLATE IS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION. IN CAGAYAN VALLEY, A PURPORTEDLY OPPOSITIONIST SLATE LED BY FORMER CONGRESSMAN LELANIO SINGSON WITHDREW FROM THE RACE DURING THE OPENING WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN, LEAVING THE KBL SLATE HEADED BY DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE VIRTUALLY UNOPPOSED. NEVERTHELESS, THE KBL CANDIDATES ARE GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF CAMPAIGNING, ALBEIT WITHOUT THE HOOPLA ASSOCIATED WITH PRE-MARTIAL LAW PHILIPPINE ELECTORAL POLITICS. NO ONE IN THE SOLID NORTH DOUBTS THAT THE OUTCOME THERE WILL BE A CLEAN SWEEP FOR THE KBL. END SUMMARY.

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2. BACKGROUND: REGION I, LOCATED IN NORTHWESTERN LUZON, COMBINES FOUR LOWLAND PROVINCES INHABITED LARGELY BY ILOCANOS--ILOCOS SUR, ILOCOS NORTE, LA UNION, AND PANGASINAN--AND THREE MOUNTAIN PROVINCES--BENGUET, MOUNTAIN, AND ABRA. ITS POPULATION OF 3,499,000 (1978 ESTIMATE) IS 7.5 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL TOTAL. THE REGION IS PREDOMINANTLY AGRICULTURAL, WITH RICE AND TOBACCO THE

PRINCIPLE CROPS. FOURTEEN SEATS IN THE INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA (IBP) ARE AT STAKE.

3. REGION II, IN NORTHEASTERN LUZON, IS COMPRISED OF THE LOWLAND CAGAYAN VALLEY PROVINCES OF NUEVA VIZCAYAN ISABELA, AND CAYAGAN; TWO MOUNTAIN PROVINCES, KALIGAPAYAO AND IFUGAO; AND THE SMALL, REMOTE SUB-PRVINCES OF QUIRINO AND BATANES. ITS POPULATION OF 2,093,000 (1978 ESTIMATE) IS 4.5 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL TOTAL. THE CAGAYAN VALLEY IS POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE RICHEST AGRICULTURAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, BUT UNTIL THE PAST TEN YEARS HAS BEEN RELATIVELY ISOLATED AND UNDERDEVELOPED. EIGHT IBP SEATS ARE AT STAKE.

4. REGIONS I AND II HAVE LONG BEEN THE CORE OF PRESIDENT MARCOS' POLITICAL SUPPORT. IN THE LAST REFERENDUM, THEY VOTED 94.8 PERCENT AND 95.4 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY, IN FAVOR OF MARCOS CONTINUING IN POWER. THIS SUPPORT DERIVES FROM THE DOMINATION OF THE TWO REGIONS BY THE ILOCANO ETHNIC GROUP, TO WHICH MARCOS BELONGS. MARCOS HAS SKILLFULLY MAINTAINED HIS POPULARITY THERE DURING HIS TWELVE YEARS AS PRESIDENT BY FAVORING THE NORTH WITH INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.

5. "NOT A CHINAMAN'S CHANCE." THIS REPORT IS BASED LARGELY ON AN OVERLAND TRIP EMBOFFS MADE THROUGH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO NORTHERN LUZON REGIONS DURING THE LAST WEEK IN FEBRUARY, AS THE CAMPAIGN WAS JUST GETTING UNDERWAY. FIRST STOP WAS ISABELA, THE LARGEST PROVINCE IN REGION II. EMBOFFS DISCUSSED THE IBP ELECTIONS WITH GOVERNOR FAUSTINO DY, THE KBL CAMPAIGN MANAGER FOR REGION II. DY EXPLAINED THAT THE KBL SLATE CONTAINS MOSTLY EXPERIENCED LEADERS--THREE FORMER CONGRESSMEN (RODOLFO ALBANO, PROSPERO BELLO, AND BENJAMIN PEREZ), ONE GOVERNOR (SIMON GATO), TWO FORMER GOVERNORS (ROLANDO PUZON AND GUALBERTO LUMAUIG), A TOWN MAYOR (CARLOS PADILLAL, AND DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE. HE SAID THE TICKET WAS BALANCED BY INCLUSION OF TWO LIBERAL (BELLO AND PUZON). ACCORDING TO GOVERNOR DY, TWENTY-EIGHT CANDIDATES WERE REGISTERED IN THE REGION. (THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS SHOWS ONLY 19 REGISTERED, HOWEVER) DY SAID THERE WAS ONE ORGANIZED OPPOSITION GROUP CALLED THE UNITED NORTHER PARTY, LED BY FORMER LP CONGRESSMAN MELANIO SINGSON. THE REST OF THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, HE SAID, "ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE."

6. DY INTRODUCED EMBOFFS TO HIS VICE GOVERNOR, DR. WILSON NUESA. NUESA, HE EXPLAINED, HAD FILED HIS CANDIDACYNON THE UNITED NORTHERN PARTY TICKET, BUT HAD BEEN PERSUADED

BY DY JUST THAT MORNING TO DROP OUT OF THE RACE. EMBOFFS
ASKED NUESA WHY HE CHANGED HIS MIND. NUESA REPLIED THAT
HIS ORGINAL IDEA HAD BEEN TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE--
SOMEONE WHO WOULD SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT WHEN HE WAS RIGHT
AND OPPOSE HIM WHEN HE WAS WRONG. BUT DY CONVINCED HIM
IT WOULD LOOK BAD FOR THE PROVINCE TO HAVE ITS VICE
GOVERNOR RUNNING AS AN OPPOSITIONIST. DY INTERJECTED,
"IT WOULD APPEAR TO PRESIDENT MARCOS THAT WE IN ISABELA
ARE SQUABBLING."

7. DY SAID THAT IN ANY EVENT THE OPPOSITIN "DOESNT"
HAVE A CHINAMAN'S CHANCE" IN REGION II. HE POINTED OUT
THAT THE OPPOSITION IS HINDERED BY BLOC VOTING, LACK
OF A POLITICAL NETWORK, AND LACK OF FUNDS. HE
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ESTIMATED IT WOULD COST AT LEAST 2 MILLION PESOS TO
WAGE A REAL REGIONAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. THE OPPOSITION
COULD NEVER RAISE THIS AMOUNT; IF THEY COULD, IT WOULD
EXCEED THE LIMIT ON CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURES SET BY COMELEC,
ANYWAY. DY NOTED THAT THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM HAS LONG
SINCE BEEN DESTROYED. HE POINTED OUT THAT BOTH HE AND
NUESA WERE ELECTED AS LIBERALS IN 1971, BUT ARE NOW
MARCOS TEAM PLAYERS.

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8. SHORTLY AFTER OUR CONVERSATION, GOVERNOR DY DEPARTED
FOR A PROVINCIAL TOWN TO ORGANIZE A RALLY FOR THE EIGHT-

MEMBER KBL TEAM LED BY ENRILE. AT LUNCH, WE MET A DAUGHTER OF SO-CALLED OPPOSITIONIST LEADER SINGSON. SHE INFORMED US THAT HER FATHER HAD DECIDED TO FOLLOW NUESA'S LEAD AND WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE.

9. GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. UPON ARRIVAL IN THE CAGAYAN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF TUGUEGARAO TWO DAYS LATER, EMBOFFS LEARNED THAT THE UNITED NORTHERN FRONT HAD COME COMPLETELY UNRAVELLED. GOVERNOR TERESA DUPAYA EXPLAINED THAT HER HUSBAND, FORMER CONGRESSMAN TITO DUPAYA, ORIGINALLY HAD PLANNED TO HEAD THE TICKET. THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF IFUGAO, GUALBERTO LUMAUIG, WOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN ON THE SLATE, BUT HE WAS COOPTED INTO THE KBL TICKET. GOVERNOR DUPAYA CHARACTERIZED THE UNITED NORTHERN FRONT AS A "PRO-MARCOS" GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO PLAY "FISCALIZER," OR DEVIL'S ADVOCATE, ROLES IN THE IBP. HOWEVER, IN THE END, THE DUPAYAS DECIDED IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR HIM TO RUN AS AN OPPOSITIONIST WHILE SHE WAS OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT SPOKESWOMAN FOR THE PROVINCE. THIS LEFT SINGSON TO HEAD THE SO-CALLED OPPOSITION SLATE, AND WHEN SINGSON WITHDREW ALL THE OTHERS QUICKLY FOLLOWED SUIT.

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10. GOVERNOR DUPAYA SAID THE CAMPAIGN IN CAGAYAN WOULD BE "FAIRLY ACTIVE." SHE SAID THE KBL CANDIDATES WANT TO BE SEEN BY THE PEOPLE AND THE LOCAL OFFICIALS WANT TO BE SEEN WITH THE CANDIDATES. ENRILE AND CO. WERE DUE TO ARRIVE IN TUGUEGARAO THE NEXT DAY TO SPEAK AT A REGIONAL ATHLETIC MEET, BUT THE GOVERNOR SEEMED NOTABLY RELAXED ABOUT THE PROSPECT. SHE SAID THEY WERE JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS SINCE THERE WOULD BE NO REAL CONTEST. SHE SAID IT WOULD BE A SIMPLE MATTER TO DELIVER A MASSIVE VOTE FOR THE KBL CANDIDATES THROUGH THE BARANGAY NETWORK. SHE SAID, "THE BARANGAY CAPTAINS, WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY THEY ARE PASSIVE."

11. DUPAYA HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A COPY OF THE ELECTION CODE. SHE SAID NO POSTERS OR LITERATURE HAD BEEN PRINTED YET. EMBOFFS ATTEMPTED TO CALL AT THE COMELEC REGIONAL OFFICE, BUT AT 4:00 PM IT WAS CLOSED.

12. KALINGA UNHAPPY. THE MOUNTAINOUS, REMOTE PROVINCE OF KALINGA-APAYAO CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH THE FLAT CAGAYAN RIVER VALLEY. THE CONTROVERSIAL CHICO RIVER DAM PROJECT (SEE MANILA A-100, 1976) HAS THE NATIVES ON EDGE. LAST YEAR PRESIDENT MARCOS REPLACED THE FORMER GOVERNOR, A LOWLANDER NAMED ROLANDO PAZON, WITH A NATIVE KALINGA, TANDING ODIEM, WHO HAD BEEN VICE-GOVERNOR. NOW,

PUZON IS ON THE KBL SLATE, MUCH TO THE CHAGRIN OF THE KALINGAS. ODIEM TOLD US THAT PUZON'S FATHER IS A WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN WITH LOGGING CONCESSIONS IN KALINGA-APAYAO. THIS WAS USED AS A PRETEXT FOR LAUNCHING YOUNG ROLLIE PUZON IN KALINGA-APAYAO POLITICS IN 1971. WHEN THE CHICO DAM CONTROVERSY HEATED UP IN 1976-77, MARCOS FELT COMPELLED TO REMOVE THE INERLOPER TO CALM THINGS DOWN. HOWEVER, PUZON'S FATHER IS STILL POWERFUL
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IN CAGAUAN AND, ACCORDING TO ODIEM, WAS ABLE TO PRESSURE MARCOS INTO NAMING THE SON TO THE KBL SLATE. (ACCORDING TO LOCAL WAGS, MARCOS ADDED INSULT TO INJURY BY INTRODUCING PUZON AT A PROCLAMATION RALLY AS "THE REPRESENTATIVE...AHM...OF..AH..KALINGA-APAYAO").

13. AS A RESULT, YOUNG KALINGA ATTORNEY ROY MASADAO IS RUNNING AS AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE TO PROTEST THE WAY THE KBL SLATE WAS SELECTED. GOVERNOR ODIEM SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT MASADAO WERE HE NOT OBLIGED BY HIS POSITION TO BE LOYAL TO THE KBL SLATE. HE SAID THE KALINGAS HAVE "LOST INTEREST" IN THE ELECTION. SOME BARANGAY CAPTAINS HAVE BEEN ASKING HIM WHY THE PEOPLE SHOULD VOTE AT ALL. HOWEVER, ODIEM HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE OUTCOME IN THIS PROVINCE WILL BE AT LEAST 90 PERCENT SUPPORT FOR THE KBL SLATE. HE SAID HE PLANNED TO CALL IN HIS MAYORS, EXPLAIN TO THEM THE NECESSITY OF OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR THE KBL, AND LEAVE IT TO THEM TO PASS THE WORD TO THE BARANGAY LEADERS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IN KALINGA-APAYAO THE PEOPLE STILL VOTE THE WAY THEY ARE TOLD.

14. EMBOFFS SAW NO OUTWARD SIGNS OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN TWO KALINGA-APAYAO TOWNS. THEY WERE INFORMED THAT THE ENRILE GROUP PLANNED A SWING THROUGH THE PROVINCE THE FOLLOWING WEEK, HOWEVER.

15. WARLORD COUNTRY SUBDUED. CIRCLING THE CENTRAL CORDILLERA, EMBOFFS STOPPED NEXT A VIGAN THE CAPITAL OF ILOCOS SUR, A HOTBED OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE BEFORE MARTIAL LAW. GOVERNOR LUIS "CHAVIT" SINGSON WHO WON THE 1971 ELECTION AFTER HIS PRINCIPAL RIVAL, FLORO CRISOLOGO, WAS GUNNED DOWN IN THE TOWN CATHEDRAL, SEEMED BORED BY THE TENOR OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN. HE EVINced NO DISSATISFACTION OVER THE SELECTION OF THE REGION I KBL SLATE. HE SAID ILOCOS SUR HAS TWO REPRESENTATIVES, ONE OLD (FORMER CONGRESSMAN LUCAS CAUTON) AND ONE YOUNG
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(PROVINCIAL BOARD MEMBER SALACNIB BATERINA.) OTHERS ON THE TICKET INCLUDE TWO CABINET MEMBERS (JOSE ASPIRAS AND CONRADO ESTRELLA), FOUR FORMER CONGRESSMEN (ANTONIO RAQUIZA, CAUTON, JOAQUIN ORTEGA, -, \$43 :9 -), ASSORTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (BATERINA; BARANGAY CAPTAIN ROQUE DE GUZMAN AND JUDGE FELIPE DE VERA, FROM PANGASINAN; FORMER MOUNTAIN PROVINCE VICE GOVERNOR VICTOR DOMINGUEZ; AND ABRA FISCAL JEREMIAS ZAPATA) AND TWO NON-GOVERNNMENT FIGURES (JEREMIAS MONTE-MAYOR OF THE FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS AND LAWYER VICENTE MILLORA, BOTH FROM PANGASINAN). PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS REGISTERED FOR THE FINAL SLOT, BUT IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT HIS NAME WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT. (MARCOS, AS PRESIDENT, IS AUTOMATICALLY AN IBP MEMBER.)

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16. GOVERNOR SINGSON SAID HE KNEW OF NO ORGANIZED OPPOSITION GROUPS IN THE REGION. HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE "CONFEDERATION OF ILOCANO ASSOCIATIONS", WHICH ACCORDING TO THE MANILA PRESS HAS FIELDED CANDIDATES IN REGION I. HE SAID HIS POLITICAL RIVALS, THE CRISOLOGOS, HAVE ONLY ONE OF THEIR LIEUTENANTS RUNNING. HE IS A MAN NAMED VILLANUEVA, WHO HAS FILED AS AN INDEPENDENT. SINGSON SAID IT WAS VILLANUEVA WHO COMPLAINED TO BULLETIN TODAY COLUMNIST JESUS BIGORNIA DURING THE SELECTION OF KBL CANDIDATES THAT OLD SOCIETY POLITICS WAS REARING ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN IN ILOCOS SUR. SINGSON SAID VILLANUEVA SIMPLY WAS DISGRUNTLED BECAUSE HE WAS LEFT OUT OF THE KBL LINEUP. THE ONLY OTHER CANDIDATE OF INTEREST IS ILOCOS NORTE'S ROQUE ABLAN, LONG-TIME MARCOS ALLY NOW ON THE OUTS WITH

MALACANANG, WHO HAS FILED AS AN INDEPENDENT.

17. SINGSON EMPHASIZED THAT THE MAIN REASON THE CAMPAIGN IS OF LITTLE INTEREST IS THAT THERE IS NO REAL CONTEST. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE WAS ELECTED GOVERNOR IN 1971 AS A LIBERAL. AT THAT TIME HE WAS CLOSE TO BENIGNO AQUINO, BUT NOW HE IS PRO-MARCOS. EMBOFF ASKED HIM IF THERE WERE ANY GOVERNORS LEFT WHO WERE NOT PRO-MARCOS. HE REPLIED, "THERE WERE BEFORE, BUT THEY HAVE ALL BEEN REMOVED." SINGSON SAID HE WAS SURE THE KBL WILL WIN EASILY IN ILOCOS SUR. HE SAID OUT OF 34 MAYORS, HE NOW CONTROLS 28. WE
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LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT SINGSON STILL MAINTAINS A "PRIVATE ARMY" OF 367 MEN SCATTERED AROUND THE PROVINCE TO ENSURE THIS CONTROL.

18. GOVERNOR SINGSON INTRODUCED EMBOFFS TO KBL CANDIDATE BATERINA, WHO WAS OBVIOUSLY HIS HANDPICKED REPRESENTATIVE. BATERINA, A YOUNG (42) LAWYER, TOLD EMBOFFS HE HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING CONSTANTLY SINCE FEBRUARY 18. HE SAID THE NATIONAL LEADERS WILL VISIT ONLY THE THREE LARGEST TOWNS IN ILOCOS SUR, LEAVING THE REST OF THE CAMPAIGN TO THE MAYORS. BUT BATERINA, AS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER, PLANS TO CRISSCROSS THE PROVINCE. EMBOFFS SAW NO SIGNS OF AN ONGOING CAMPAIGN IN ILOCOS SUR. GOVERNOR SINGSON HAD NO LIST OF CANDIDATES, NO CAMPAIGN LITERATURE, NO POSTERS.

19. A TECHNOCRAT GOVERNOR. BEFORE RETURNING TO MANILA, EMBOFFS STOPPED BRIEFLY IN BANGUED, ABRA, TO TALK TO ITS NEWLY APPOINTED 33-YEAR-OLD GOVERNOR, ARTURO BARBERO, THE SON OF UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE CARMELO BARBERO. A FEISTY, RATHER ARROGANT YOUNG MAN, BARBERO CONSIDERS HIMSELF TO BE A NEW BREED OF GOVERNOR, A TECHNOCRAT RATHER THAN A POLITICIAN. AS IF TO DEMONSTRATE THIS, HE DISPLAYED A COMPLETE LACK OF INTEREST IN THE IBP ELECTION. HE SAID THE KBL REGION I TEAM HAD BEEN THROUGH BANGUED SEVERAL NIGHTS BEFORE. (TEN "VOTE KBL" SIGNS WERE STACKED IN A STARIWELL AT THE CAPITOL.) HE SAID ABRA HAS ONE KBL CANDIDATE, PROVINCIAL FISCAL ZAPATA, WHO WAS CHOSEN IN A CAUCUS OF REGIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS. HE PREDICTED THE KBL LIST WILL GET AT LEAST 90 PERCENT SUPPORT IN ABRA, PROBABLY MORE. HE HAD HEARD OF THE CONFEDERATION OF ILOCANO ASSOCIATIONS, BUT CHARACTERIZED IT AS A POLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT GROUP "TRYING TO GET THE ATTENTION OF PRESIDENT MARCOS." DESPITE HIS APPARENT DISINTEREST, BARBERO WAS THE ONLY
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GOVERNOR EMBOFFS ENCOUNTERED WHO HAS RECEIVED A COPY OF THE ELECTION CODE.

20. COMMENT. NORTHER LUZON HAS BELONGED TO PRESIDENT MARCOS THROUGHOUT HIS NATIONAL POLITICAL CAREER. MARCOS HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO ACCOMMODATE THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS THERE. THIS CAN BE CLEARLY SEEN IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE KBL SLATE. ONLY 2 OUT OF 22 IN REGIONS I AND II ARE POLITICAL NEWSOMERS. THE REST ARE PROVINCIAL POLITICAL KINGPINS OR ELSE THEIR PROTEGES. IN EXCHANGE, MARCOS DEMANDS POLITICAL LOYALTY. THOSE WHO HAVE REFUSED TO PLAY BALL WITHIN MARCOS' TIGHT GROUND RULES HAVE LONG SINCE RETIRED FROM POLITICS. THE INFIGHTING FOR PLACES ON THE KBL TICKET STIRRED SOME INTEREST, BUT BY NOW IT HAS DIED DOWN. THERE IS SOME RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF THOSE WHO DID NOT MAKE THE KBL SLATE, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO CONCERN THE PRESIDENT. SINCE THE OUTCOME IN REGIONS I AND II HAS NEVER BEEN IN DOUBT, THERE IS LITTLE OF THE EXCITEMENT ONE WOULD NORMALLY ASSOCIATE WITH A NATIONAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. PROGNOSIS: AFTER A DULL, ONE-SIDED CAMPAIGN, ALL KBL CANDIDATES IN REGIONS I AND II WILL WIN HANDILY. NEWSOM

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